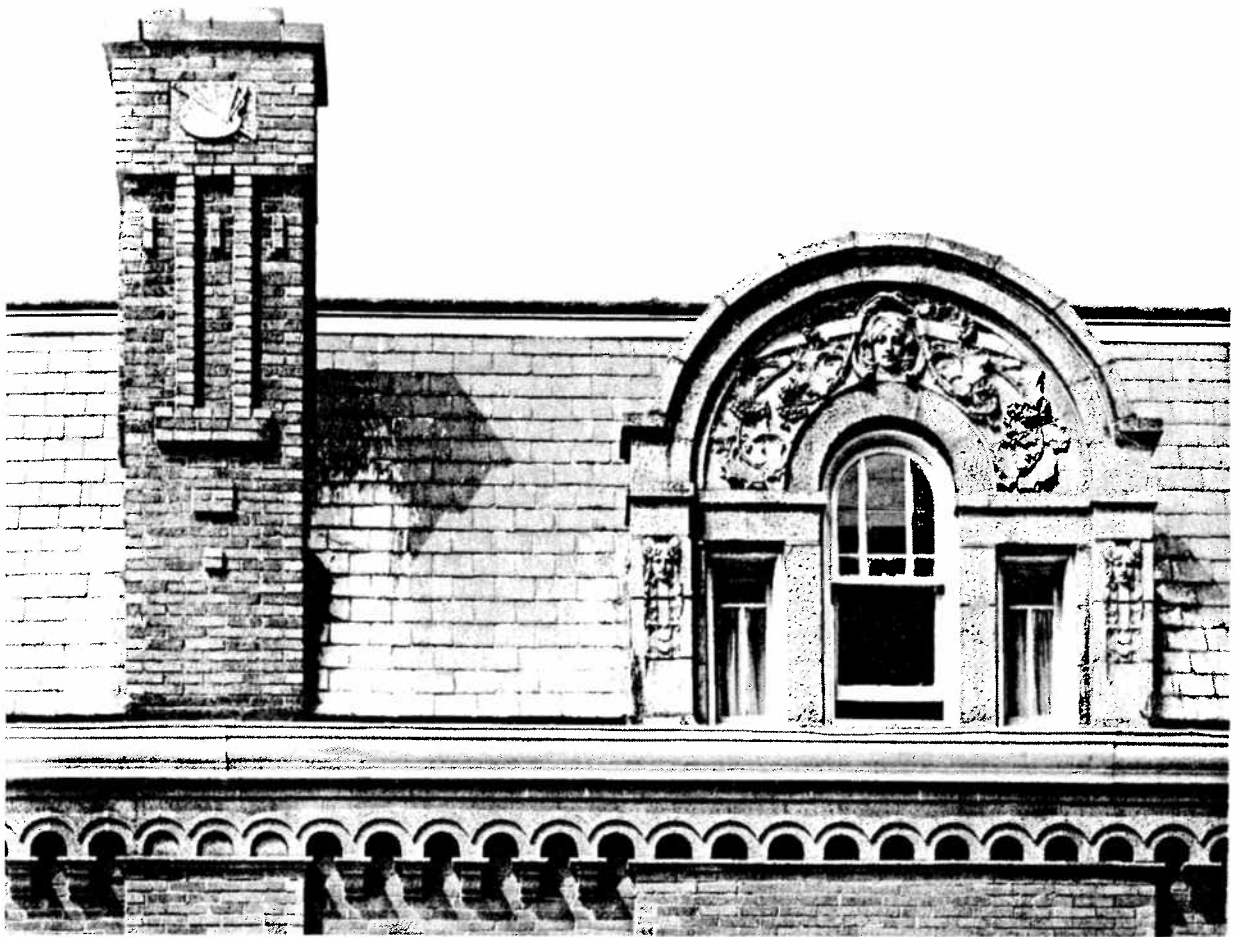


PRELIMINARY STAFF SUMMARY OF INFORMATION



Tree Studios

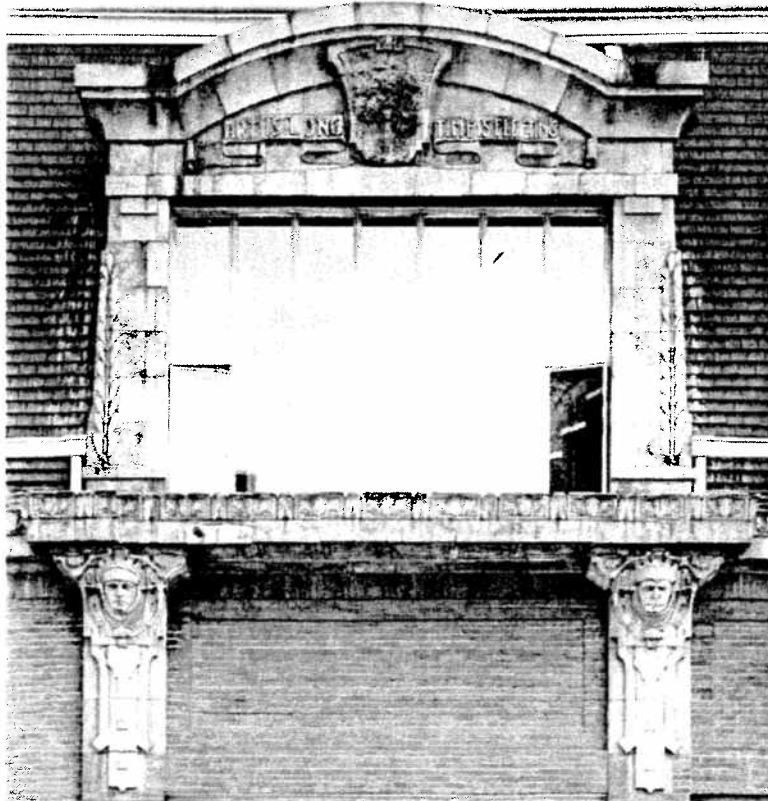
4 E. Ohio/5 E. Ontario/603-621 N. State St.

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in June 1980
Recommended to the City Council on November 21, 1982



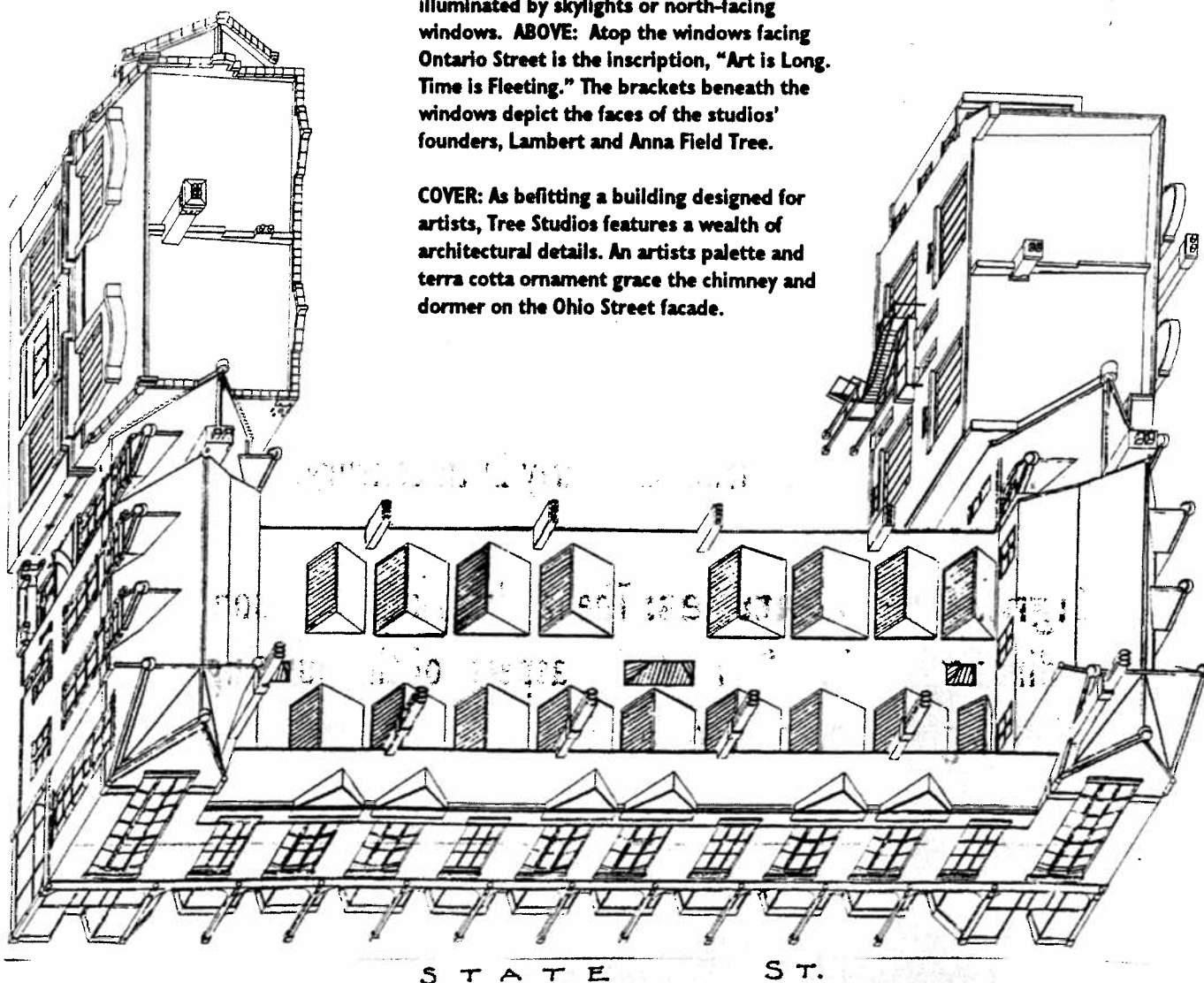
CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
J. F. Boyle, Jr., Commissioner



BELOW: Tree Studios includes 50 units, which are organized around a courtyard and illuminated by skylights or north-facing windows. **ABOVE:** Atop the windows facing Ontario Street is the inscription, "Art is Long. Time is Fleeting." The brackets beneath the windows depict the faces of the studios' founders, Lambert and Anna Field Tree.

COVER: As befitting a building designed for artists, Tree Studios features a wealth of architectural details. An artists palette and terra cotta ornament grace the chimney and dormer on the Ohio Street facade.



ONTARIO ST.

OHIO ST.

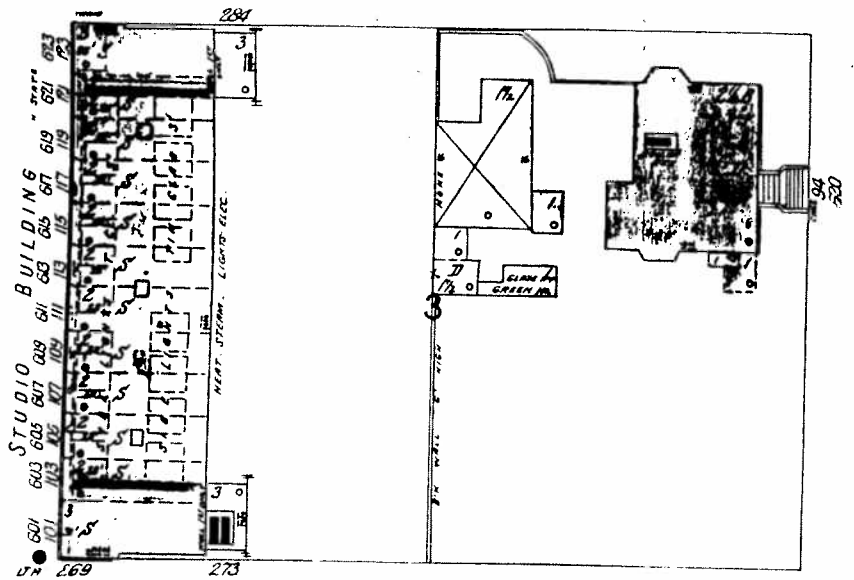
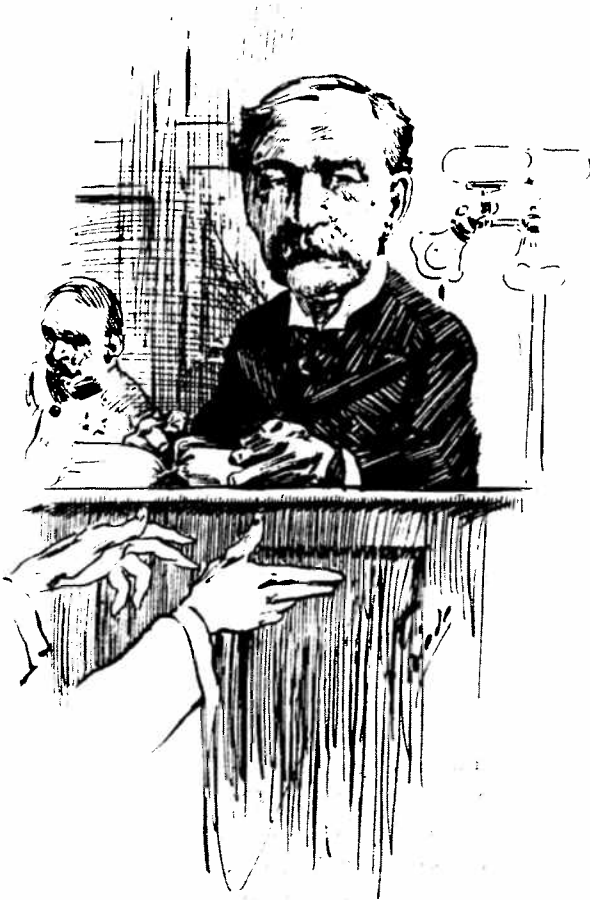
STATE ST.

TREE STUDIOS is a wholly unique building, unmatched in any city in the United States. Intended as a home for artists and cultural life at the turn of the century, philanthropists Judge and Mrs. Lambert Tree had the studios built with the finest craftsmanship and details of the period.

In addition to being the nation's oldest surviving artists studios, it is one of the most distinctive features of both Chicago and of its River North neighborhood.

With its large windows, picturesque details, and interior courtyard, the building instantly created a unique oasis in the midst of the growing city. The design of the north and south wings of the U-shaped structure are particularly distinctive, representing rare examples of the influence of English and German architecture from the early 20th century.

Significant Features: The landmark designation ordinance specifies "all exterior aspects of the building, including its roofline and courtyard."



Tree Studios was literally built in the backyard of its benefactor, Judge Lambert Tree (left), whose mansion was located at the southwest corner of Wabash and Ontario streets. The mansion, which was demolished in 1910 and replaced by the Medinah Temple, appears at the right in the c.1900 photograph (top) and the 1907 map (above). Tree Studios is visible at the left, prior to the completion of the north and south wings.

TREE STUDIOS

4 E. Ohio St., 5 E. Ontario St., and 603-621 N. State St.,

Dates and Architects:

State Street facade: 1894; Parfitt Brothers, with Bauer & Hill

Ohio Street facade: 1912; Hill & Woltersdorf

Ontario Street facade: 1913; Hill & Woltersdorf

When Lambert Tree built the original portion of the Tree Studio Building, he was creating an unusual building in his own back yard. The Tree residence, built in 1884, stood on Wabash Avenue, then known as Cass Street, between Ohio and Ontario streets, on a block previously owned by Tree's father-in-law. Stables stood behind the house, and behind them Tree built a studio building in which artists could rent work space. Commercial space on the ground floor helped keep the studio rents low. After Tree's death in 1910, the eastern half of the block, including the house, was sold to the Medinah Temple Association which demolished the residence and stables. On this site in 1912 they built the present Medinah Temple which covers the entire half-block. That same year, trustees of the Tree estate added an annex on to the Ohio Street end of the studio building; the Ontario Street annex was added in 1913. The studio complex was sold in 1956 to the Medinah Temple Association who have maintained it as a place for artists to live and work. An addition to the temple has reduced the private garden around which the studio buildings are arranged, but no substantial alterations have been made to the structures themselves.

The Idea for the Studio Building

Lambert Tree's wife Anna Field Tree, daughter of the first Marshall Field, apparently provided the impetus for the construction of the studio building. Mrs. Tree had a strong interest in the arts and on a visit to New York City took her husband to see a studio structure there. This building had been designed by Parfitt Brothers, a New York firm founded by the eldest of three brothers who came to the United States from England in 1863. Tree hired the Parfitt firm to design his proposed



The character of the River North neighborhood has changed significantly from the early days of Tree Studios.

ABOVE: This c.1920 photograph, looking east on Ontario Street from State Street, shows how the scale of Tree Studios, right, related to the surrounding streetscape. Medinah Temple is visible in the background. **RIGHT:** A 1938 painting, by James Murray Haddow, depicts the buildings that could be seen, across State Street, from his window in Tree Studios. (The Embassy Suites Hotel is now located on this site.) The painting, "The Lady in Red," was featured in an Art Institute of Chicago show of the period.



Chicago studio building but also found a local firm to handle the actual construction work. Bauer and Hill was the firm he selected, but in 1894, shortly after completion of the plans, Augustus Bauer retired and the firm became Hill and Woltersdorf. According to the contract attached to the original drawings for the studio, the working drawings made in Chicago were to take precedence over the New York drawings if any disputes arose during construction. How much influence Henry W. Hill and Arthur F. Woltersdorf had on the building as it was actually built is uncertain. When the trustees of Tree's estate, two years after his death in 1910, decided to build an addition to the studio building, they commissioned Hill and Woltersdorf to design it; in 1913 the firm was asked to design a second annex, and in 1923, a third addition which was never built was designed by Woltersdorf alone. Arthur Woltersdorf therefore provided the continuity between the first building and its annexes. Although each segment has its own character and style, the three fit together harmoniously, joined by their common picturesque quality and unusual design.

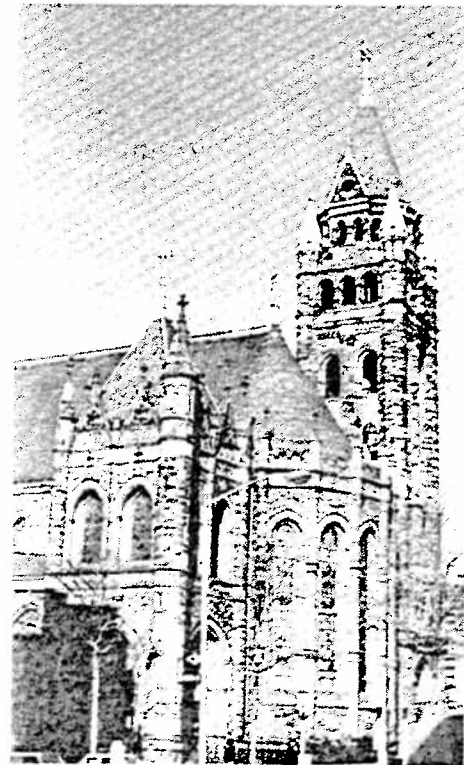
Judge Lambert Tree

Lambert Tree was born in Washington, D.C. in 1832 and came to Chicago in 1856 after completing his legal studies. He became a judge of the Circuit Court in 1870 after a successful law career, and he was known for his strong stand against corruption in city government. He resigned his judicial post in 1875 and spent the next three years traveling in Europe. After several losing campaigns for a seat in the United States Congress during the 1880s, Tree was appointed ambassador to Belgium, a position he held from 1885 to 1888 when he was appointed ambassador to Russia. In 1890, he returned to America and spent the next two years in Washington D.C. as a member of the Intermonetary Commission after which he returned to Chicago. Tree became involved with the cultural life of the city, particularly the Newberry Library and the Chicago Historical Society, and he donated two sculptures to Chicago's parks. He was a philanthropist whose activities included the establishment of an award program, still in existence today, to honor heroic firemen and policemen.

Construction of the Tree Studios, however, was his most notable contribution to the city. Other studio buildings were constructed in Chicago subsequent to the Tree Studios, but none of these has the high quality or architectural interest of this building. At the entrances to the original studio building, a pair of heads, one male and one female, are carved into the stone ornament. The heads are said to be those of Judge and Mrs. Tree. When the Ontario Street annex was built, several years after Lambert Tree's death, the architect and sculptor honored the Trees by incorporating two pairs of male and female heads into the brackets that support two large studio windows, using the stone likenesses as a model. Although the Trees were not directly responsible for the annex, they were further recognized by the use of a tree in the terra-cotta ornament above each second-floor window on the Ontario Street annex.



ABOVE: Retail storefronts line the State Street facade of Tree Studios. The rental income from these stores originally helped subsidize the rents for the artists studios. The main entrances to the studios face Ontario (left) and Ohio streets. **BELOW:** A detail from one of those entrances. The principal architect for this portion of the building, which dates to 1894, was Parfitt Brothers, a New York firm known for its residential and ecclesiastical designs. **RIGHT:** Their design for St. Augustine's Church in Brooklyn (1888).

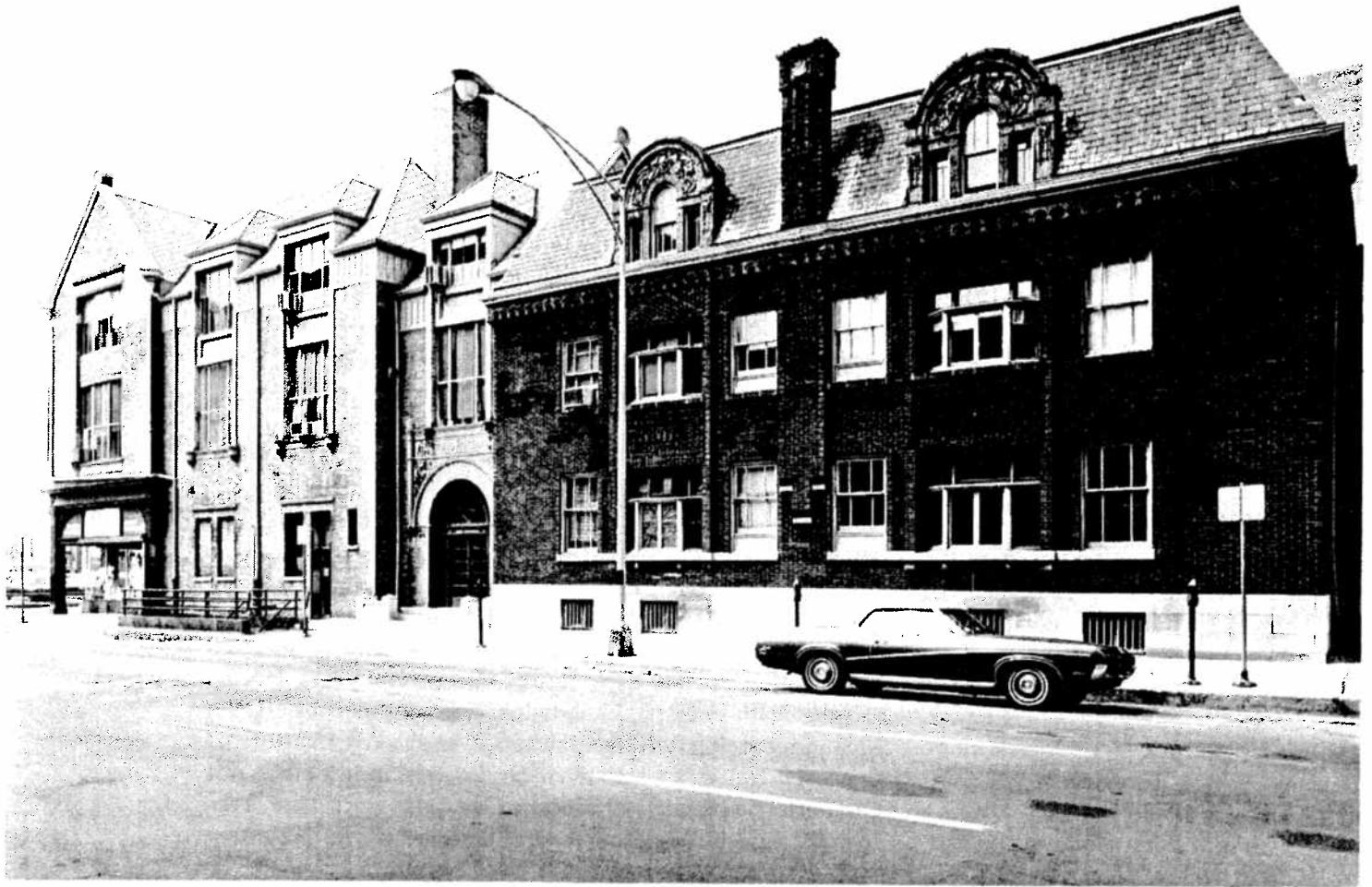


The Architects

Arthur Woltersdorf, born in Chicago in 1870 to German parents, had a long career in architecture, as a designer of buildings, as a writer on architectural subjects, and as an active participant in architectural organizations. He first studied architecture by working in the office of Bauer and Hill and the office of Burnham and Root. He then spent three years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, followed by two years in Europe. On returning to Chicago, he rejoined the office of Bauer and Hill shortly before Augustus Bauer's retirement in 1894. Bauer, born in Germany in 1827, came to America in 1850 and to Chicago three years later. He gained prominence among the early architects of the city and designed many school buildings as well as commercial structures. Henry W. Hill, also German-born, came to Chicago in 1872 at the age of twenty and began his association with Bauer in 1881. The firm of Hill and Woltersdorf began in 1894 and continued until 1914 when Hill retired and returned to Germany. Woltersdorf practiced independently until 1923 when he formed a new firm, Woltersdorf and Bernhard. Throughout his career Woltersdorf was active in the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, editing a book published by that organization in 1930, titled *Living Architecture*, a collection of essays by important local architects. He was elected a fellow of the A.I.A. in 1910 and served as president of the Illinois Society of Architects for several years. During the years between 1920 and his death in 1948, Woltersdorf wrote numerous articles for architectural periodicals and a catalogue for an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1927 titled *Brick Architecture in Germany*. His interest in brick was not only academic; brick was a material he often used in his architectural work. The Tree Studio annexes clearly show his skill in designing with this material and his attention to the details which set this building apart from standard building types.

The Tree Studio Building and Annexes

The Tree Studio Building extends along State Street from Ohio to Ontario Street. A two-story structure for most of its State Street length, it gains a third floor when it reaches and turns the two corners. The ground-floor shop fronts are set off by cast-iron frames from the buff-colored roman brick of the upper floors. Pressed metal covers small gables above the second-floor windows and the spandrels between the second and third-floor windows in the corner portions. A frieze of pressed metal runs across the top of the second-floor windows. There are two entrances to the studios, one on Ohio and one on Ontario. These identical doors are decorated with carved limestone depicting foliage twining around symbols of the arts and the words "Studio Building." At the base of the two shallow steps leading to each door is a pair of low walls or seats, also of limestone. These entrances also lead to the garden court in the center of the complex. On the garden side of the first floor, studios were designed especially for sculptors, with wide French doors through which pieces of sculpture could be moved to the garden and then to the street. The sculptors' studios and those in the two-story part of the building were not meant to



ABOVE: The majority of Tree Studios' Ohio Street facade dates to 1912, when the complex was expanded to accommodate a growing demand for high-quality, artists studio space. This facade, which is considered one of Chicago's best examples of the English Arts & Crafts style, includes unique bowed windows, "Palladian-style" dormers framed by ornamental terra cotta, and a brick chimney with a carving of an artist's palette (see cover photo). This portion of the building, along with the Ontario street side built a year later, were designed by Hill & Woltersdorf, a local architectural firm known for its progressive, European-influenced designs. **RIGHT:** A 1908 photo of Arthur F. Woltersdorf, the firm's chief designer and a longtime president of the Illinois Society of Architects.



be lived in and the second-floor studios are very small. In the corner portions, the studios are larger.

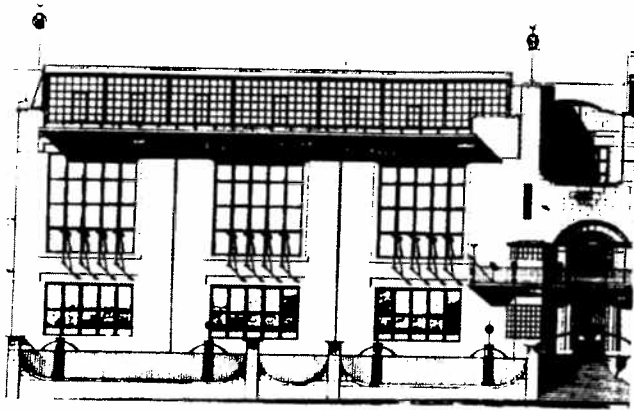
Interaction between artists was encouraged by the use of connecting doors between studios. Display cases in the hallway allowed residents to show their work. The garden became the scene of concerts and other gatherings. The March, 1895 issue of a local magazine, *The Arts*, commented favorably on the studios:

Chicago can at last boast of a studio building, wherein the artist may have as many comforts as his more favored brother the office man. We are indebted to Lambert Tree for this luxurious building. . . . This new building fills a long-felt want. . . .

A continual waiting list of artists wanting to rent space in the building prompted the trustees of the Tree estate to plan the two annexes. The Ohio Street annex was built in 1912 and the Ontario Street one in 1913. A three-story structure of dark red brick, the Ohio Street annex contains four studio apartments. It has much smaller windows than the original building but incorporates four bowed windows to catch additional light. A tall chimney rises through the middle of the facade, terminating above the dormer windows of the third floor with ornamental brick work and a terra-cotta panel showing an artist's palette and brushes. Two dormer windows are the most notable feature of the Ohio annex. Each is a three-part Palladian window framed by terra-cotta panels. The large arched form over each window is decorated with holly leaves and berries with a female head at the center. A smaller female head and a simpler floral design embellish the vertical areas of the frame on either side of each window.

The Ontario annex is the same height as the Ohio annex but appears on the exterior to have only two floors. Actually, the four studio apartments inside it have mezzanines, thus creating duplex units. Each floor has two very large, tall windows which are divided by thin mullions into narrow panes of glass. Between the windows of the first floor are three panels of terra cotta, showing figures in Greek dress representing painting, sculpture, and architecture. The flat surface of the first-floor brick wall is broken up by the recessing of some of the brick to produce greater shape and shadow on the wall. The second floor slopes back in the manner of a mansard roof, with the two large windows standing out as dormers. These windows rest on a narrow platform which forms part of a stringcourse between the two floors. Supporting the platforms are two pairs of heads which bear a similarity to those of Mr. and Mrs. Tree on the entrances to the original building. These heads are set into an ornamental framework that gives them a medieval appearance. Over each window is a slightly curved pediment, at the center of which is a tree on a shield and two lines from a poem by Wordsworth: "Art is long/Time is fleeting/So be up and doing/Still achieving still pursuing."

The original Tree Studio Building was designed in the picturesque Queen Anne style popular in the 1890s, but in a variant of that style which is unusual in Chicago.



BELOW: The Ontario Street facade of Tree Studios, which dates from 1913, is another rare example of the European modern style in Chicago. **ABOVE:** Its design is reminiscent of the main facade of the Glasgow School of Art, an influential design by Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. **RIGHT:** The ornamental details of the Tree Studios' facade include capital/brackets that feature the faces of Lambert and Anna Field Tree (shown here), the studios' original benefactors.

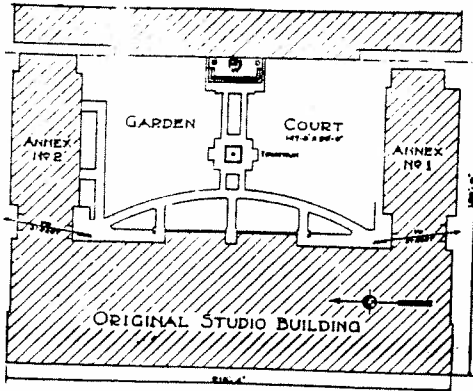


The Queen Anne style, with its combination of different materials, textures, colors, and shapes, took many forms. In the Eastern part of the United States, where the style had been first introduced from England at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, the style stayed closer to its English roots which were in the tradition of medieval domestic architecture and the small rural town. The Tree Studio Building was designed by Eastern architects from England, and the building reflected, particularly before the windows were altered and their heavy mullions removed, an unusual design for Chicago. The Ohio Street annex, built in 1912, is quite different although it also shows an English influence. The English Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found one of its largest concentrations of American adherents in Chicago. The movement was particularly influential in the decorative arts. The Prairie school movement, which began in the Chicago area, is generally considered to be an aspect of the Arts and Crafts, inspired by some of the same concerns as the English movement but taking a particularly American and Midwestern form. The Ohio Street annex looks not to the native style but to the architecture of the English Arts and Crafts. Like the Queen Anne before it, the medieval, domestic, and rural were its inspiration. The Ontario Street annex shows another aspect of the Arts and Crafts movement, that of the Scottish and continental versions of the movement which did not turn to the past but looked for something entirely modern. The architects of the Ontario annex seem to have been aware of the work of C.F.A. Vosey in England and Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Scotland. These architects and others working in Austria developed a new appreciation for the simplicity of square and rectangular forms. In the Ontario annex there is both the flat geometry of the new architecture and ornament derived from the slightly earlier Arts and Crafts movement.

The ornament of the Ontario annex, both the Greek figures on the first floor and the heads under the large windows, and perhaps the motto, were very likely the work of sculptor Richard Bock. Although there is no written evidence, the heads are identical in overall style to those Bock designed for another building designed by Arthur Woltersdorf in Chicago; the Greek figures also are similar to other work by Bock. Richard Bock is best known as the artist who produced sculpture for buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, Dwight Perkins, and others. Bock collaborated with Woltersdorf on a number of projects, and he designed the Woltersdorf family cemetery monument.

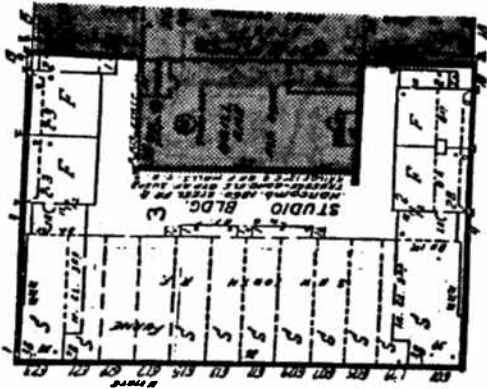
The Tree Studios since 1950

The Tree Studio Building and annexes have remained largely unaltered through the years. Shortly before the Medinah Temple purchased the complex in 1956, the windows in the studios of the first building were changed: the mullions and transoms were replaced with much thinner supports and larger panes of glass. Some trim was removed from the windows on the corners of the building. A modern roofing material has replaced the original shingles. The most drastic change to the



ABOVE: The outdoor "garden court" of Tree Studios dates from 1912-13, when the north and south wings—and conversion of the rear portion of the ground floor into sculpture studios—were constructed (see site plan). The above photograph, which dates from c.1940, shows a tenant posing by the courtyard's fountain; the sculpture studios are visible to her left.

BELOW: The only significant change to the Tree Studios complex occurred in 1966 (see shaded area on site plan), when Medinah Temple built an addition that intruded significantly into the courtyard. A contemporary photograph of the courtyard shows the current location of the fountain—immediately next to the addition.



complex occurred when the Medinah Temple constructed an addition to the temple that occupies about half of the garden court. This structure intrudes into the quiet and attractive space despite the ivy grown over its walls at the request of the tenants.

The Tree Studios are one of a number of buildings constructed in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that reflect the growth of interest in the cultural life of the city. The Tree Studios were a success from the start, and that success encouraged others to follow. When the Studebakers outgrew their warehouse at 410 South Michigan Avenue, the Tree Studios were a significant factor in their decision to convert the warehouse into a studio building they named the Fine Arts Building. The article on the Tree Studio Building in the 1895 *The Arts* magazine concludes by saying:

The art interests of Chicago have grown to such an extent during the past few years that they are already recognized as being of paramount importance in the growth and advancement of our capital city.

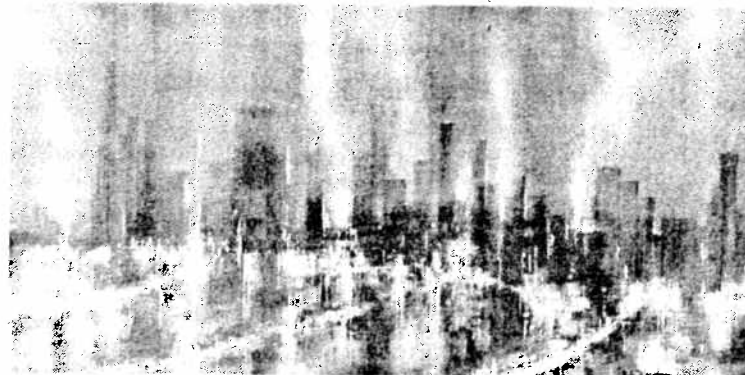
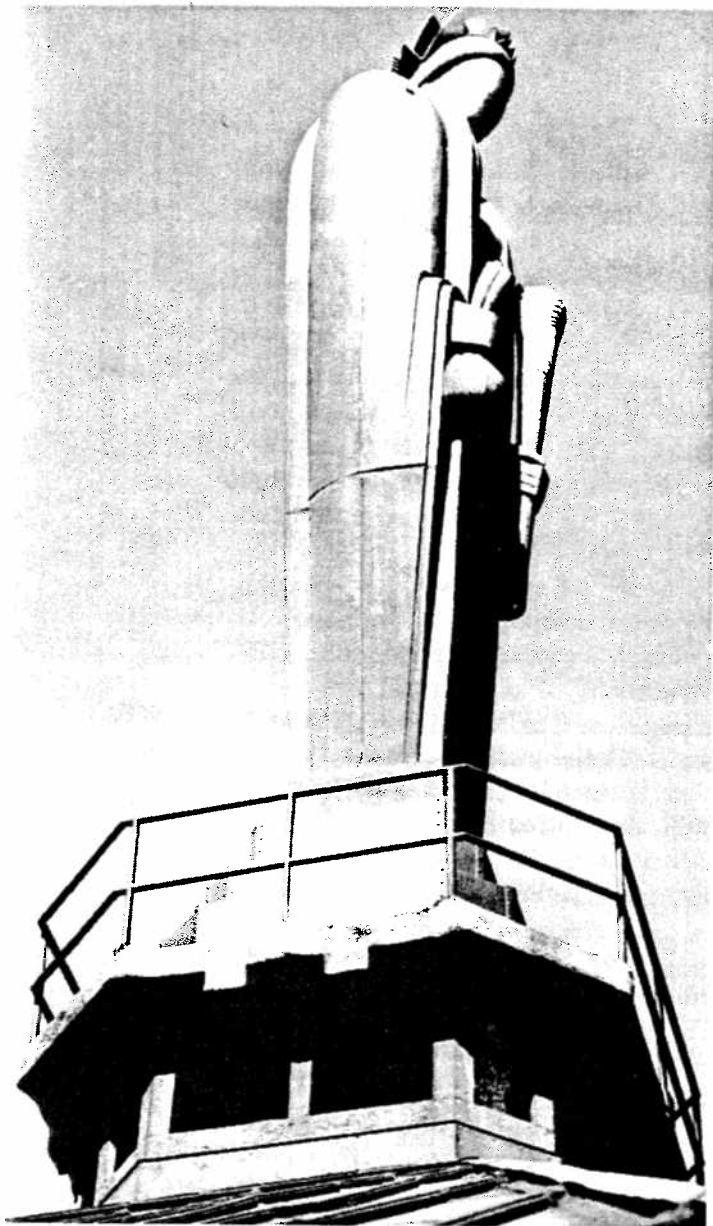
The Tree Studios have never lacked tenants of the reasonable priced studios, and in 1923 a third addition was designed by Woltersdorf, to be built along the fourth side of the garden, but it was never built. An article on "Enclosed Courtyard and Studio Apartments" in the March, 1922 issue of *The Architectural Record* documented the Tree Studios extensively in words, drawings, and photographs. The author introduced his description by stating:

There are two different kinds of Studio apartments, one being such a studio as a working artist would find convenient and practical; the other an arrangement such as someone playing at being an artist consider attractively informal, artistically effective and unusual. To take up the first kind at once, we find in Chicago a Studio structure [the Tree Studios] . . .

Over the years tenants have included J. Allen St. John, illustrator of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan books; John Stoops, sculptor of the statue of Ceres on the top of the Chicago Board of Trade Building; a number of curators and instructors from The Art Institute of Chicago and its School; and many other important local artists in to meet a specialized need, they have met that need for many years and should continue to do in the future.

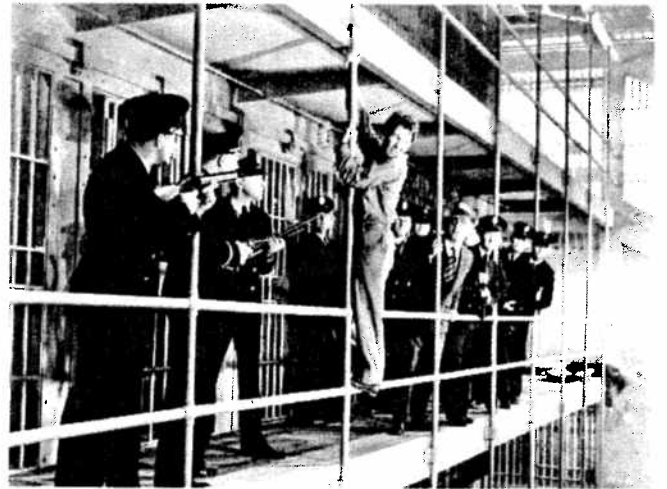
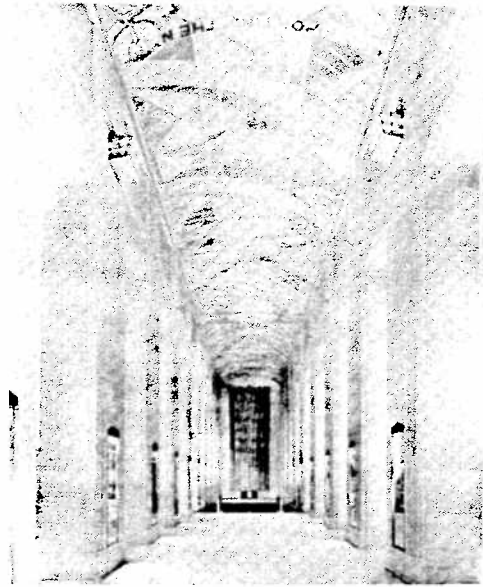
The Artists of Tree Studios

Among the 400 artists who have lived or worked in Tree Studios during its first century are—THIS PAGE (counterclockwise, from left)—*John Storrs*, the sculptor of the “Ceres” statue atop the Board of Trade, 1930; Mr. and Mrs. *Antonin Sterba*, in the courtyard, c.1955; *Albin Polasek* (his sculpture studio in 1946); and painter *Richard Florsheim* (“Parkways,” 1966)—FACING PAGE (clockwise, from upper left)—*J. Allen St. John*, the illustrator of the “Tarzan” book series; *John Warner Norton*, the muralist for the Chicago Daily News Building, 1922; actor *Burgess Meredith*, who appeared in 120 films, including “Castle on the Hudson, 1940;” *Ruth Van Sickle Ford* (“State Street,” 1932) and *Pauline Palmer* (“From My Studio Window,” 1907).



TARZAN

AND THE
GOLDEN LION



APPENDICES

Criteria for Designation

When Tree Studios was first recommended for landmark designation on November 1, 1982, the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks found that it met landmark designation criteria 1, 3, 4, 6, and 10 of the Municipal Code of Chicago.

Since that time, a new landmarks ordinance has been approved by the City Council. Based on a review of the revised criteria, as set forth in Section 2-210-620 of the Municipal Code, Tree Studios is now seen as meeting the following four criteria:

CRITERION I ("A Critical Part of City's Heritage")

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

The Tree Studios has played an important and ongoing role in the art and culture of Chicago--and of the nation--dating to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. A year after the fair, Mr. and Mrs. Lambert Tree constructed the studios as a way to encourage the retention of the artists who had come to the city to attend and display at the international exposition. The fair itself had demonstrated to the world that Chicago was a multi-dimensional community in which diverse interests could flourish. The construction of Tree Studios made a smaller, but nonetheless significant, contribution to the broadening of the city's social and cultural life at the turn of the century.

According to his testimony at the public hearing on the proposed landmark designation of Tree Studios, Roger Gilmore, the then-dean of the Art Institute said the building represents:

A kind of combination of economic and cultural activity that very few other buildings have been able to achieve in Chicago's history... particularly in the 1920s, which was a period of real cultural renaissance in Chicago [when it] stood as a kind of mecca for these people.

Furthermore, the building "exemplifies the best traditions of the pluralism and vitality that make Chicago art what it is," said Robert J. Evans, the former curator of art at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. He continued:

While the general public might consider the lions on the front steps of the Art Institute to be synonymous with art in Chicago, I think

historians and curators would say that the Tree Studio Building is equally important.

Finally, Tree Studios is the oldest known artists studios to survive in the United States. Several other artists studios survive—in Boston, New York, and St. Louis—but none are as old as Tree Studios and few, if any, are as architecturally significant. The significance of this building truly stretches across the nation.

CRITERION 3 (“Significant Person”)

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

Both the creator (Lambert and Anna Field Tree) and the occupants (dozens of significant artists) of Tree Studios have contributed significantly to the artistic, cultural, historic, and social development of Chicago, the Midwest, and the United States.

A noted judge in Chicago, Lambert Tree also served as ambassador to Belgium and Russia. As a local civic leader, he and his wife’s (the daughter of Marshall Field) efforts on behalf of the arts made them renowned local philanthropists. Among their accomplishments was the creation of an awards program honoring heroic firemen and policeman, the commissioning of sculptures in local public parks, and involvement in the Newberry Library and the Chicago Historical Society.

However, it was the construction of Tree Studios—in the backyard of their mansion on Wabash Avenue (where Medinah Temple now stands)—that was their most notable contribution to the city. The Trees, themselves, were honored by the architects of the building, who used their faces for several of the figures that appear in various places on the Ohio and Ontario street facades.

Although other studio buildings were later constructed in Chicago, none has the high quality or architectural character of this structure. According to critic William Marlin, it is “A beautiful mecca for artists and writers, that could and did beckon the best, most involved creative leadership in our town.”

As for the approximately 400 artists who have worked or lived in Tree Studios during the building’s first century of life, their impact literally can be seen in the public and private collections of museums and schools across the country. The list of significant artists who worked and resided in Tree Studios includes:

- ▶ sculptors Louis Grell, Maximilian Hoffman, Michael Murphy, Albin Polasek, John Storrs, and Emil Zettler;
- ▶ illustrator J. Allen St. John;
- ▶ painters Christian Abrahamsen, Louis Betts, Karl Albert Buehr, Richard Florsheim, Ruth Van Sickle Ford,

- Fry, Frederick Grant, Oliver Grover, James Murray Haddow, Lucie Hartrath, Edward Holslag, Anna Lynch, Pauline Palmer, and Antonin Sterba;
- ▶ muralists Frances Badger, Edgar Cameron, and John Warner Norton;
 - ▶ actors Peter Falk and Burgess Meredith; and
 - ▶ countless visitors, including artists Ivan Albright and John Singer Sargent, composer Leonard Bernstein, actress Catherine Deneuve, and architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

CRITERION 4 (“Important Architecture”)

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

The architecture of Tree Studios is truly unique. There simply are no other buildings like it, in Chicago or elsewhere in the United States. Furthermore, the quality of its design—in details, materials, and craftsmanship—reflects the very highest standards of the period in which it was built.

The very design of the building reflects its original and continuing function: as studio space for working artists. The stores on the ground floor, for instance, provided rental income that helped keep the studio rents low. These stores, which face State Street, also helped enliven the street, and their intact cast-iron storefronts provide a rare glimpse into the character of the Chicago streetscape at the time of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition.

Above and behind “this economically shrewd stand of shops,” according to William Marlin, “was arrayed an innovative layout accommodating the working and living needs of the residents.” Tree Studio’s 50 units are illuminated by a combination of skylights, north-facing windows, and an interior courtyard that provide the high quality of light desired by artists.

Notes Marlin:

It is one of the [city’s] more solid, beguiling, lesson-laden examples of enlightened planning, sensitive architectural design and detailing, and of upbeat urbanistic quality....It remains a work of stimulating style, replete with craftsmanly details and exquisite special arrangements.

The garden courtyard, around which the U-shaped building is arranged, is a “tremendous focal area,” observed Roger Gilmore. “It shows a concern for nature and building that represents something very important architecturally that should be considered more and more.” Meanwhile, the building’s exterior, Gilmore says:

Displays a concern for design that is characteristic of the best architecture of that era. It has a relationship to the Arts and Crafts movement—to the work of famed architects Charles Mackintosh and Frank Lloyd Wright. It gave us a foretaste for the kind of detail and

function that served a particular purpose for those type of collaborative efforts.

The principal architect for the State Street facade was Parfitt Brothers, a New York City architectural firm that was well-known for its high-quality residential and ecclesiastical designs in Brooklyn. The design of this facade—constructed of tan brick, featuring large windows, and ornamented with green-colored metalwork, stone accents, and intricate stone carvings—represents a type of Queen Anne style design that, while popular in England and on the East Coast of the United States, is rare for Chicago.

Eighteen years after its construction, with Tree Studios having become an enormous success, the building was expanded to accommodate the growing demand for high-quality artist studio spaces. The architect of these two wings was the Chicago firm of Hill & Woltersdorf, one of the city's leading proponents of European modernism and the firm that had assisted Parfitt Brothers with the initial building.

Their designs for the north and south wings reflect the apex of the Arts and Crafts style in Chicago. Built of red brick to complement the Medinah Temple to the east, these portions of the Tree Studios are detailed with a wealth of architectural ornament, fine brickwork, and large studio windows—befitting the wings' status as the most prestigious of the building's studio spaces. These wings quickly attracted some of the city's top artists, including: illustrator J. Allen St. John, architect Marya Lilien, muralists Edgar Cameron and John Warner Norton, sculptors John Doctoroff and Albin Polasek, and painters Richard Florsheim, Oliver Denton Grover, and J. Wellington Reynolds.

The south wing, which faces Ohio Street, represents one of the city's finest examples of English Arts and Crafts architecture. The design is particularly significant for its dormered roof and exquisite details. The north wing (facing Ontarios Street), in contrast, features four large, north-facing windows surrounded by stone details that have been attributed to Richard Bock, an important sculptor who often collaborated with architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The design of this facade also is one of the city's few examples of early European modernism, as influenced by the designs of Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

CRITERION 7 (“Unique Visual Feature”)

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.

The Tree Studios building has been an established and familiar visual feature within the River North neighborhood for more than a century. It is a unique and distinctive work of

architecture that has an unmistakable presence on the street.

Part of this is due to its extremely prominent location, at the corners of State Street and two major crosstown streets—Ohio and Ontario—that lead to one of the city's main gateways: the exit and entrance ramps off the Kennedy Expressway. As a result, Tree Studios is familiar, on a weekly basis, to literally hundreds of thousands of pedestrians and vehicular passengers alike.

The building's fine detailing, craftsmanship, and use of materials are particularly apparent to pedestrians traversing the area to visit the many shops, nightclubs, and restaurants in the surrounding blocks. The ground-level storefronts, with their intricate cast-iron details and segmental arched openings, are among the most intact in the downtown area. They create a streetscape along State Street that provides a distinctive contrast to the nearby parking lots and blank walls that mark much of the surrounding River North area.

The storefronts, upper-story studios, and the massing, roof profiles, and features of the facade—all testimony to the urbane character of the building—also are easily discernable to vehicular passengers, again providing a remarkable visual oasis in the heart of the River North entertainment district.

The late architect, Marya Lilien, in her statement at the public hearing in support of landmark designation, noted how Tree Studios is "very much in the spirit of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, with whom I worked for several years. The mixture of the architecture, the residential part, the studios, the workshops, and the stores makes for a lively urban scene."

Significant Features

Whenever a building, site, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks identifies the "significant features" of the property, in order for owners and the public to understand which elements are most important to the significance of the landmark.

Based on its evaluation of Tree Studios, the recommended significant features of this proposed landmark are:

- ▶ all exterior aspects of the building, including its roofline and courtyard.

Acknowledgments

CITY OF CHICAGO

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(cover; inside front cover, top; facing: pp. 3, top; 4, top; 5, top rt. and bot.; 6, bot.)

Sallie Hood/Kay Ettington (inside front cover, bot.; back cover)

Chicago Historical Society (facing: pp. 1, top; 2, top)

From *Chicagoans As We See 'Em*, 1904 (facing p. 1, left)

From *Sanborn Insurance Map, 1906* (facing p. 1, rt.)

Collection of Barton Faist

(facing: pp. 2, bot.; 6, top rt.; artists photo spread, except as noted; inside back cover)

From *ALA Guide to New York City* (facing p. 3, mid.)

From *Handbook for Architects and Builders, 1908* (p. 4, bot.)

From *Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1987* (facing p. 5, top left)

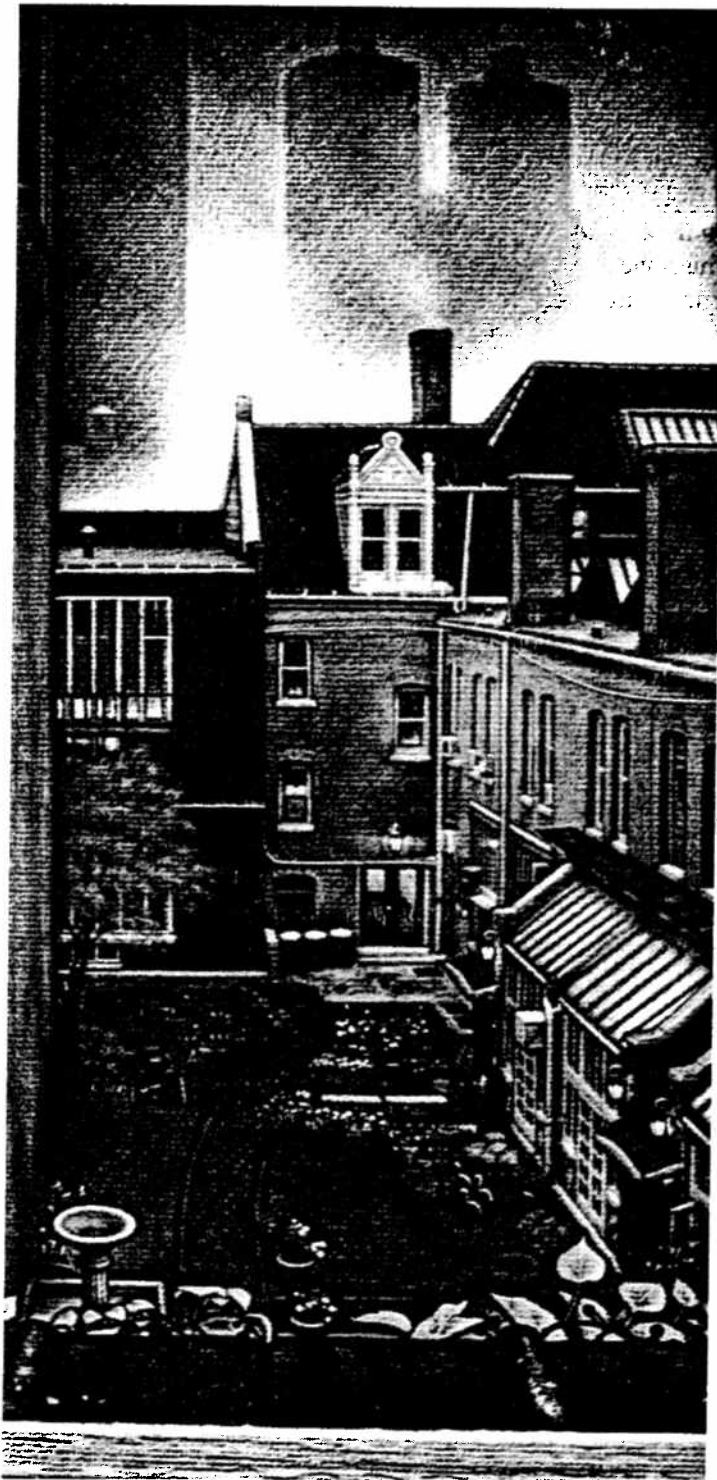
Chicago Department of Planning and Development

(facing pp. 3, bot.; 6, left; photo spread: "Ceres" and movie still)

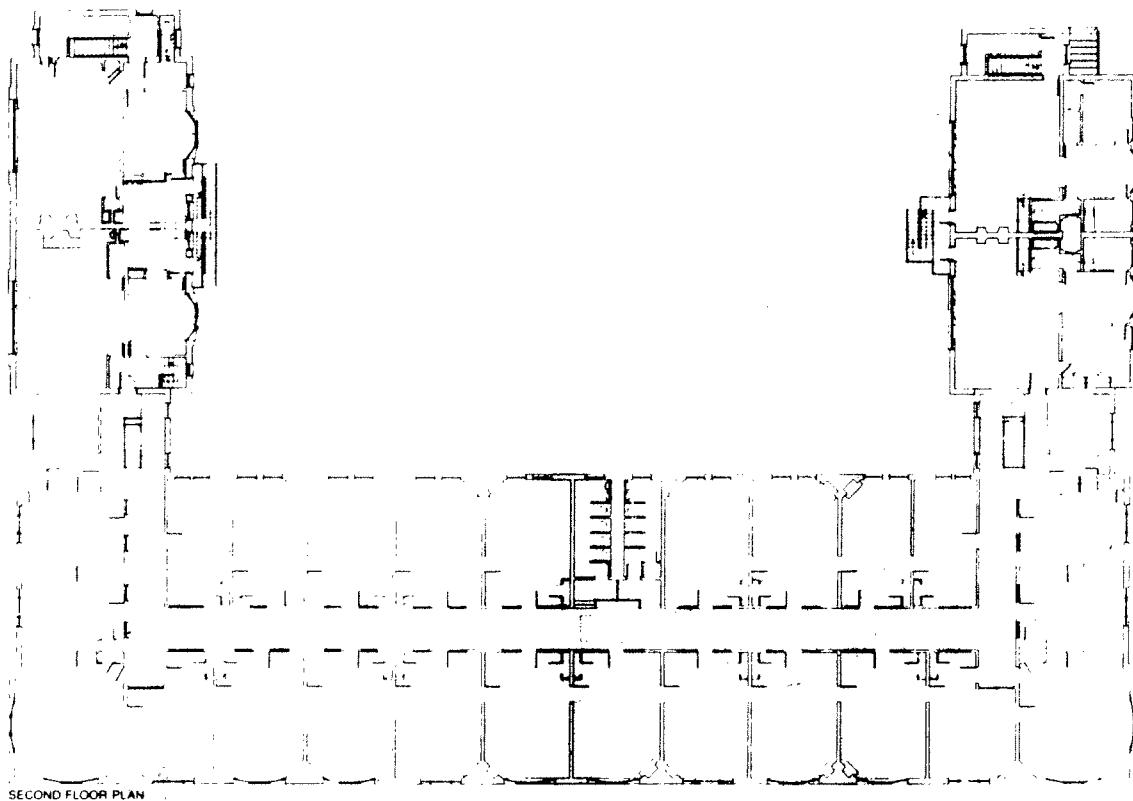
Special Thanks

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of Barton Faist, who has conducted extensive research into the history of the artists who have lived and worked in Tree Studios.

This report was written in 1980; it was reprinted in 1997



"Approaching Storm Threatens Tree Studios," by Barton Faist, 1986. This view, looking south over the Tree Studios' courtyard, was drawn from one of the windows in the north wing.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks. Recommendations concerning specific landmarks are sent to the City Council following a detailed staff study—which is summarized in this report—and an extensive public review process. After the Council designates a landmark, it is protected by law from demolition or inappropriate alterations. The Landmarks Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 320 N. Clark St., Room 516, Chicago, IL 60610; ph: 312-744-3200; 312-744-2958 (TDD)